

E-Learning English Courses for Part-time Students- B1/C1 Modules Project

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Abstract

In accordance with priorities for schools of higher education, studies are supposed to promote generic and transferable skills, i.e. to teach students how to learn, prepare them for performing work, but not as part of a single profession, but to equip them with employability and to promote students' commitment to the learning process. Another important issue is counteracting molecular structure of the society by promoting cooperation, which contributes to enhanced sense of identity and social bonds.

The modern course concept promotes social constructivism and reflects changes observed in the world of large international corporations, where during recruitment and professional career emphasis is placed not only on top qualifications and knowledge of foreign languages, but also on self-promotion with the use of media skills indispensable for the promotion of individual and corporate goals, and soft skills, i.e. ability to work in a group, create and actively participate in any community, curiosity and acceptance of constant changes.

To meet the needs of higher education and the professional market the University of Warsaw Center for Foreign Language Teaching decided to start a project E-Learning English Courses for Part-time Students- B1/C1 Modules. It was an unknown path especially for the authorities who were only accustomed to e-courses taking advantage of Web 1.0 technology. Nevertheless, the fear of change and the unknown was overcome by the future benefits.

The project's aim was to create e- language courses adapted to the needs of a new student profile, i.e. the Net Generation, which is characterised by the ability to perform several tasks simultaneously and who prefer to learn through visual stimuli and interactive cooperation. According to a report by Cisco (2008), students who have access to multimodal learning score better than students at unimodal institutions. The use of various forms of instruction boosts internal motivation of students, and thereby promotes independent seeking and expanding knowledge.

The courses were based on heuristic approach, which places emphasis on active role of a student in the learning process. They focused on the development of self-education ability, which involves independent obtaining, processing and selecting information (knowledgeable versus knowledge +able), cooperation within web community, and in this way promoted the acquisition of skills indispensable in the lifelong learning process. Moreover, the courses promoted teaching methods, which develop critical thinking and independence.

Due to the innovative form of e-learning based on the use of Moodle educational platform on one side, and the latest trends in language teaching with the use of state-of-the-art technologies on the other, the project constituted an attempt to meet the demand that higher education institutions face today, as it is expected that they should help students to acquire the skill of obtaining information with the use of latest technologies.

The paper will present the benefits the project brought to students and the institution as well as the challenges it still has to work on in the future. The project received very good reviews; moreover, it was awarded the European Language Label in December 2009.